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AUTHOR Fraleigh, Warren P.
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ABSTRACT

Physical education curriculum is examined as it concurs with the philosophical premise that the aim of the curriculum is development of the individual for the purpose of that person's liberation. Six areas of development within physical education are identified as they relate to the primary value of liberation of the individual. Development of performance skills in sport, dance, and exercise allow a person to make a team, to have a way of social relationships with others, to increase self-confidence, and to use leisure time. Organic fitness is seen as liberating the individual to enjoy physical activities and to be the author of his own actions. Technical knowledge in sports, dance, and exercise enables the individual to participate in these movement forms and to understand and appreciate participation by others. Knowledge of the biological, economical, historical, psychological, and sociological aspects of sport, dance, and exercise enriches the individual by providing insight into the impact of these activities on human life. Participation in sport, dance, and exercise is a natural way of attaining clearer self-understanding and is a means for development of the ethical character of participants. (JD)

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A Philosophic Basis for Curriculum Content in Physical Education*

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by

Warren P. Fraleigh, Ph.D.
Professor of Physical Education
State University College
Brockport, New York

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If we examine the literature of physical education for the past several decades we find many articulate professionals suggesting what, in their judgments, ought to be primary emphases in physical education. Upon analysis we can find that these suggested primary emphases are fostered by three things, namely; those things which are believed to be possible in physical education, second, those possible things which appear to be particularly important in relation to the current problems of society and, third, those possible things which rank at the highest levels in the value priorities of the professionals proposing them. For only two examples:

1. Physical fitness was judged as the primary emphasis in the late 1950's by several professionals. This recommended primary emphasis was in accord with the national concern for fitness raised by the Kennedy's and by the comparative results of the Kraus-Weber tests. Advocates of such an emphasis were often exercise physiology specialists or devotees of personal exercise.

2. Some professionals judged self knowledge and self actualization as primary emphases in the late 1960's and into the 1970's. This emphasis was consistent with the popularization of humanistic, third force psychology and with the changes of consciousness generated by the student movement and the Vietnam war. Advocates of this emphasis were often involved in the study of humanistic psychology or experiencing significant changes in their own consciousness.

In each of these advocacies we find an emphasis raised to a level of priority which, when scrutinized in relation to an historical view, indicates

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some measure of myopia. Myopic advocacy by professionals is indicative of at least three things. First, we are all subject to the enthusiastic emphasis upon meeting the latest and most publicized societal concern. Second, myopic advocacy usually promotes something which is important - although not exclusively so when all possibilities are considered. Third, most of us like to have our own professional competency and interest areas raised to a level of priority because it makes us more important. For these three reasons we can expect that others, and ourselves, will be occasionally limited in our own vision.

We need, then, to identify a perspective which, although allowing a place for legitimate and varied emphases, helps us to view our own pet priorities and the immediate societal emphasis in a wider context. I suggest that the kind of needed perspective is provided by the concept of the aim of the school curriculum and the aim of the physical education curriculum. By aim I mean the basic direction which the curriculum pursues. James Macdonald in "Value Bases and Issues for Curriculum" in ASCD's Curriculum Theory calls the basic aim of education "... the most fundamental educational value commitment...."[1] Accordingly, we can understand the aim of the curriculum to mean the primary value direction toward which the curriculum is oriented. The concept of aim is general, directional and not a fixed achievement in contrast to the idea of objective which is specific, concrete and clearly achievable. In comparing the two concepts analogically we may liken the concept of aim to moving toward the East while, from St. Louis, we can identify related objectives such as Chicago

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[1]Alex Molnar and John A. Zahorik (Editors), Curriculum Theory, Washington, D.C.; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1977, p. 16.

and New York. Please note that we never, at least on the face of this earth, finally arrive at East but we do arrive at geographic objectives, such as Chicago and New York, which indicate that we are not going West or that we are moving in the Easterly direction specified by the aim. Thus, the aim of the curriculum is the broad educational value commitment which underlies and makes sense out of all our more limited objectives, e.g., myopic priorities.

Macdonald, in the ASCD source previously cited, identifies three primary educational value commitments or aims. These are:

1. "Socialization, as an aim relates to the training potential of schooling. It is the acceptance of the status-quo by definition and the replication of the present social class and role structure, ethos, and attitudinal sets by the most efficient and effective methods possible."[2]

2. "... the explicit or implicit goal or aim of education has been proposed as human development - most specifically, the development of the individual."[3]

3. "A third general aim, often embedded in a developmental position, is more adequately called liberation. . . . . essentially, it is an aim of freeing persons from the parochialness of their specific times and places and opening up the possibilities for persons to create themselves and their societies."[4]

In reviewing these three aims it appears to me that the second and third can be combined appropriately. Combining the two would result in the proposition

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[2]Ibid., p. 16.

[3]Ibid., p. 17.

[4]Ibid., p. 17.

that the aim of the curriculum is development of the individual for the purpose of his/her liberation. This should be the primary value orientation of education and, consequently, physical education. There are several lines of reasoning which are supportive of such an aim. In brief form, without extended discussion, some are:

1. In the United States the individual is supreme and institutions are viewed as the servants of humans. Accordingly, individual development is highly compatible with such a tradition.

2. In the Western world there is a long tradition of viewing human beings as being capable of choice and having the potential to live a free life. Thus, individual development which is the basis for liberating persons to realize freedom is consistent with this long tradition.

3. The recent focus upon humanistic education as a palliative in this industrial-technological society places contemporary emphasis upon the idea of individual development for liberation.

4. Socialization, as the primary aim, places too great an emphasis upon adjustment to what is in a world of rapid change and in a society with pluralistic values. Additionally, without primary emphasis placed there, socialization will occur inevitably in the educational system of any nation because there is always some important influence of the social structures and values upon education.

Adopting as the aim of the curriculum the development of the individual for the purpose of his/her liberation avoids the problem of a myopic emphasis but, at the same time, allows for the inclusion of such myopic emphases in a more comprehensive view. In short, such an aim does declare the primary value basis of the curriculum, it does establish a fundamental direction to the educational venture (such as going East rather than West) and it does allow for all the good myopic emphases but establishes them as contributory aspects of the primary value commitment.

The philosophical base for the determination of curricular content is, then, the stated aim of the curriculum which is a declaration of the primary

value orientation. The liberation of individuals is the primary value orientation of the curriculum while such liberation is approached by the achievement of certain kinds of development in the individual. Thus, certain kinds of development are not worthy in themselves, that is intrinsically valued ends, but are good because their accomplishment aids in moving toward the liberation of the individual. Curriculum content, then, is selected on the basis of the kinds of development which are chosen because of their ability to contribute to liberation.

What are the kinds of development available within physical education which are relevant to the liberation of the individual? This question can be answered in a variety of ways. I will identify six areas of development and attempt to relate each to the primary value of liberation of the individual.

Performance Skills

The development of performance skills in sport, dance and exercise is a long honored kind of development in physical education. The value of skill development has been variously stated. Skills are good because they allow a person to make a team, to have a way of social relationships with others, to increase self confidence, to use leisure time, and so on. Each of these and more is true for some particular persons in some particular circumstances but the primary value of skill is broader and more inclusive and more totally significant. My colleague Scott Kretchmar says it well:

> ... the skilled body is the "body functional." It "carries" the individual beyond him or herself. It is an avenue of new relationships with the world.
>
> Gains in body education are recognized by sensing increased temporal-spatial opportunity. More paths of activity are available. Aspects of the world are more interesting, richer, more impelling relative to possible engagement with them. Parts of

> the environment "come alive." A mountain becomes that which can be climbed; a pantomime can be acted out; a distance can be traversed; a sport challenge can be accepted; a given duration of work can be lived. And with this increased richness of the world, the body remains, as it were, in the background as a lived access, as a source of dominion. The paradox is clear. When the body is educated, it is often forgotten.[5]

The development of performance skills liberates the individual by freeing him/her <u>from</u> the constant demands of gravity, of advancing age, of personal reticence, of social or sex-related stereotyping, and so on and frees him/her <u>for</u> expanded modes of contact with the world. Skill development allows the individual the <u>possibility of choice</u> to participate or not (and there is no freedom without choice). Skill development to the level of expertise liberates the individual to the possibility of the creative challenges and experiences of new techniques and strategies.

There are many, many ways of establishing categories for the curricular content relevant to skill development. At the present stage of my thinking I can see several important categories which, I believe, have particular relevance to the primary value of liberation. I am sure that these categories are not discreet and mutually exclusive of one another. At the same time I can not verify that they include all that needs to be. Nonetheless, I think that this kind of categorization is relevant because effective skill development in each would contribute markedly to the bodily liberation of the person. The categories are:

1. <u>The movement environments</u> such as air, land and water in which skillful movements are performed in essentially different mediums. Performing skilled actions of sport, dance and exercise in such different environments liberates the individual by making each of the environments a friendly, non-threatening situation in which the person

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[5]R. Scott Kretchmar, "Body Skill and Liberal Arts Education" A Position Paper. Department of Physical Education, State University College, Brockport, New York, August 1, 1973, p. 11

is comfortable. Since performance in each of these mediums requires very different skills the individual is freed from discomfort in any movement environment and freed for effective performance in any movement environment.

2. The focus of consciousness of the mover such as on the body itself, on external objects to be moved or on the form created by the movement. Performing movements where the mover's consciousness is focused in each of these three different ways provides the ability to "center" one's consciousness in very different ways in effective movements. Such ability frees the individual from only one kind of "centering" and frees him/her to center consciousness in different ways while performing effectively.

3. The development of advanced performance skill in one or more particular varieties of sport, dance or exercise. The effective performance of highly skilled actions frees the individual from the conventional and frees him/her for creative actions. Advanced skill performance also liberates the individual by providing the direct experience of the unification of consciousness with movement as contrasted with the experience of separation or splitting of consciousness and movement. In such experience the individual knows the unified self as a free unity.

Organic Fitness

Like skills the development of organic fitness has long been an important part of physical education. Also, like skills, organic fitness has been promoted as being good because it develops more efficient circulo-respiratory functioning, enhances recovery from illness, contributes to weight control, establishes a healthy citizenry, and so on. Again, each of these is "good" in a limited sense but none speaks totally to the liberating benefit of organic fitness in the way it is experienced by individuals. The development of organic fitness is a bodily liberation from the personal doubts and reticence which a sedentary individual evidences in a reluctance to extend himself. Much like the expanded world of opportunity created by skill development the possession of organic fitness helps make the world come alive in terms of potential activities for the individual. A long hike through the woods at an outing becomes

an invitation rather than a threat, the opportunity for a backyard volleyball or soccer match with the kids becomes a play event rather than an obligation, the construction of a patio becomes a satisfying project, and even shoveling snow becomes a real possibility for a different relation with the world. The individual who has developed organic fitness is freed from viewing such tasks as impossible intrusions and freed for taking them up with alacrity and even enthusiasm. The individual who has experienced organic fitness knows that the dragged out, constantly tired and bored bodily feeling which is so common among sedentary people is not the way it has to be or the way it ought to be. The person who has experienced organic fitness is liberated because he/she has confidence in bodily ability to do things demanding strength and endurance rather than shrinking from them. The individual with organic fitness is liberated "... to be the author of his own actions and not merely a reacting victim or passive spectator."[6]

The appropriate categories of development in organic fitness, when we consider skill development separately, include cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance and flexibility.

Technical Knowledges of Sports, Dances and Exercises

The development of technical knowledges in sports, dances and exercises is another conventional source of physical education content. Technical knowledge of sports, dances and exercises is essential in order for the individual to participate in these movement forms and to understand and appreciate participation by others. The acquisition of such knowledge frees individuals

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[6]Ibid., p. 11.

from ignorance and allows freedom of choice to participate in sports, dances and exercises. Such knowledge is essential, of course, to participation and participation is essential to move toward the liberation associated with skills development and organic fitness.

In the case of sport appropriate categories of technical knowledge are rules, terminology, strategies, playing and spectating courtesies and information on the hallmarks of quality equipment, supplies and apparel.

For dance, knowledge of terminology, of rhythmic patterns and of musical accompaniment are the categories.

For exercise, knowledge of terminology, of specific effects of specific exercise patterns, of safety precautions and routines and information on quality equipment and apparel are all appropriate.

Knowledge of the Biological, Economic, Historic, Psychological and Sociological Aspects of Sport, Dance and Exercise

There has been considerable reluctance in physical education to include such knowledge as one of the kinds of development to be pursued in the physical education curriculum for the general student. In terms of moving toward the value of individual liberation I think this is most unfortunate. I do not see how physical education can adequately serve the value of liberation without such knowledge development. Such knowledge is absolutely essential in two ways. First, this kind of knowledge frees individuals from ignorance about sport, dance and exercise in human life. In doing so it enriches the individual by providing insight into the significant and diverse impacts of sport, dance and exercise. This negative liberation from ignorance is the base, also, for a positive liberation. That is, it provides the knowledge needed for individuals to make informed judgments and decisions about their own participation, and that

of their children and relatives, in sport, dance and exercise and about the appropriateness, or inappropriateness, of institutionally sponsored programs of sport, dance and exercise. Without such knowledge the individual is shackled by the hucksterism of commercial enterprise, subjected to the pressure of contemporary fads in sport, dance and exercise and victimized by conventional, often inaccurate, information. Perhaps only a few selected examples will make the point more vividly. Individuals need to know the relationships of exercise, appetite and weight control in order to be free to arrive at informed decisions in their own lives and the lives of family members. Individuals need to know some of the developmental possibilities and the economics of sport, dance and exercise in order to vote intelligently on school budgets and taxes and upon municipal construction bonds to build stadia for professional sports teams.

There is an ever growing fund of knowledge which would be most appropriate, when properly organized, for the general student in physical education. The developments of the past two decades have increased both the quantity and quality of knowledge available although much more needs to be done. With no attempt to identify major topics or their curricular organization or instructional delivery the following categories of knowledge appear to be appropriate:

The principal effects of sport, dance and exercise upon human biological growth and development and the general principles of exercise physiology.

The principal effects of sport, dance and exercise upon human psychological growth and development and the basic psychology of human voluntary physical activity.

The reciprocal effects of sport, dance and exercise upon important human institutions such as education, politics, religion and the family.

The economic impact of sport, dance and exercise in contemporary society and comparisons with the past and projections to the future.

The diverse functions of sport, dance and exercise in varying cultures in history.

Knowledge of Self in Sport, Dance and Exercise

The rhetoric of physical education has long proclaimed that participation in sport, dance and exercise is a natural way of attaining clearer self understandings. The attainment of self understanding is a development which is intimately related to liberation. Insofar as the experience of self in sport, dance and exercise provides a more accurate picture of an individual's personality it helps liberate that individual from positive or negative illusions. Insofar as an individual is liberated from illusions about personality that individual is free for relating more effectively to his/her own reality.

The liberation available through self knowledge is generally discussed as a direct outgrowth of the experience of sport, dance and exercise. To use the cliche, "It is caught, not taught." Nonetheless, curricular planning can provide structured activity which engages the individual in reflection upon and interpretation of the experience of self. Such reflective kind of activity helps the individual to a more fully conscious and articulated knowledge of self and, thus, is useful in a fuller liberation of the self by self knowledge. For examples, some categories which might be used in reflection upon experience of self in sport, dance and exercise are: the self as competitive and as cooperative, the self as aggressive and as submissive, the self as individual and as a member of a group, the self as violent and as tender, the self as adequate and as inadequate, the self as exhausted and as energetic, the self as enduring and as giving up, the self as joyous and as depressed, and so on.

Ability in Ethical Decision Making

The literature of physical education has asserted for decades that engagement in sport, dance and exercise is a fertile ground for the development of the ethical character of participants. This assertion is partially correct and, I believe, partially incorrect. It is correct insofar as it indicates that there are numbers of experiences in sport, dance and exercise which have great potential for ethical examination. It is incorrect insofar as it indicates that we are doing this task adequately - we are not.

Ability in ethical decision making is liberating in two related ways. First, ability to make ethical decisions frees the individual from the bonds of conventional thinking and from self-interested thinking. By its nature ethical decision making requires individuals to ascertain justifiable reasons for actions which go beyond conventional approval, or "to act that way is good because the social group says it is good," and beyond self-interest, or "to act that way is good because it is good for me." Consequently, the ability to justify an action for reasons other than, and superior to, conventional social approval or personal advantage is an ability which frees the individual from those limited perspectives. Second, freeing the individual from these bonds is the necessary condition which allows freedom for being a true moral agent. Being a true moral agent requires the ability to make action decisions on criteria superior to convention and self interest, the ability to use an effective procedure for ethical decisions and the willingness to do so.

The physical education curriculum can contribute to freeing the individual to be a moral agent by developing his/her ability in ethical decision making. To do so requires explicit attention to such content as moral criteria of action in sport, dance and exercise, procedures for ethical decision making and

examination of actual situations in sport, dance and exercise to which the criteria and procedures may be applied.

Conclusion

I have not spoken in any way to some obvious concerns which arise. Questions which deal with the organization of instructional strategies, with sequencing of content, with specific content and so forth are very different concerns. I have attempted to identify basic areas of development and general categories of content within those areas from which particular content appropriate to a group of learners may be selected, arranged sequentially and taught by use of appropriate methods. The perspective presented here suggests that selection, arrangement and teaching in the content areas will be heavily influenced by the aim of the curriculum, namely, the development of the individual for the purpose of his/her liberation.